

MINIMUM OPERATING STANDARDS

Nebraska DHHS Volunteer Program

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INTRODUCTION The following policy and procedures are viewed as minimum operating standards for all volunteer programs within the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). In addition to this, all operational volunteer programs should have supplemental policy and procedures for individualized program needs and requirements.

Section I. Volunteer Eligibility

Volunteers may be selected from all social and economic groups within the community, without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, religion, political affiliation or physical/mental disability.

A parent or guardian's signature is required for individual volunteers under age 19. Volunteer opportunities for individuals under the age of 19 may be allowed when deemed appropriate by the Volunteer Coordinator.

Federal Fair Labor Standards Act provides that employees may volunteer hours of service to their employer without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered, provided such services are not the same type of services for which the individual is employed to perform. Employees shall not be required or expected to volunteer.

Section II. Recruitment

Recruitment for volunteers will be coordinated through the Volunteer Coordinator in a thoughtful, planned manner with recruitment strategies suited to community resources and local needs. Methods of recruitment may include, but are not limited to group presentations, mass media, and the involvement of local resources such as private and government businesses, volunteer referral centers, schools, churches, senior service programs, and employment offices.

All printed recruitment material must provide a positive agency image and include the DHHS logo and design standards outlined by Communications and Legislative Services of DHHS.

Section III. Screening

The type and extent of volunteer screening will vary with the nature of the volunteer position. For placements where an individual volunteer will be working directly with a client/resident/member/youth, thorough backgrounds checks will be completed to include the Child and Adult Abuse Registries, law enforcement, Motor Vehicles and personal references. In circumstances where a community group of volunteers provides similar direct services, all volunteer activities must be constantly supervised unless a background check has been completed on the individual(s) providing the service.

In addition to background checks, all volunteers providing transportation services must be screened for the following as per policy of the State of Nebraska Office of Risk Management. Transportation volunteers should be screened initially and annually by:

- A. viewing of the volunteer's driver's license for renewal date and restrictions;
- B. viewing of the volunteer's insurance coverage card;
- C. a periodic check with the NE Department of Motor Vehicles to monitor accrued points and driving record of the volunteer;
- D. verifying the safety of the vehicle to be used by the volunteer.

Based on information received, the decision to place a volunteer is at the discretion of the site management.

Section IV. Placement/Supervision

Placement of the volunteer is a negotiated activity involving the Volunteer Coordinator, volunteer and designated supervisor working together. There should be flexibility for a volunteer to try out a placement and for a supervisor and/or Volunteer Coordinator to reassign a volunteer. Each site should have a method for identifying volunteers (such as a name tag, sign-in board, etc.).

All volunteers or groups of volunteers will have a designated employee who serves as supervisor. This supervisory person can be any employee including those without any official supervisory duties.

Section V. Orientation and Training

In order to develop an effective, beneficial, and successful Volunteer Program, preparing volunteers for the kinds of duties and responsibilities they will be asked to assume is critical. Volunteer Coordinators and/or placement supervisors will provide an orientation and initial training for all volunteers prior to placing them in a work assignment. Orientation and training is a requirement for all volunteers and can be conducted, on an individual basis, with small groups, or included with staff.

Minimum information should include the mission and vision of DHHS and the policies and procedures of the agency and volunteer program that includes liability, confidentiality, attendance, and if applicable, universal precautions for infectious diseases and conflict management procedures.

Section VI. Record Keeping

Files will be kept on each volunteer or group of volunteers and will contain the following information:

Application. Individual volunteers will complete an application/registration form and signed release of information to obtain background checks, where applicable.

Background Checks. Verification obtained should be dated and reflect the name of the volunteer.

Driver's License/Auto Insurance. For volunteers using their personal vehicle for work related to their assigned volunteer job, include a copy of their auto insurance verification. For volunteers driving a personal or state vehicle as part of their assigned volunteer job, include a photocopy of their current driver's license.

Signed Agreements. All volunteers must sign a prepared statement agreement to follow all agency policies and requirements directly related to the volunteer assignment including those related to security, confidentiality of records and other privileged information.

Termination Documentation. If a volunteer is terminated, the record must reflect that the person was separated at the decision of the agency.

Volunteer Time Sheets. A record of hours worked will be kept for each registered volunteer and groups of volunteers.

Section VII. Evaluation

There will be ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of volunteers to ensure that volunteer services are being delivered consistent with program expectations, safety considerations, and the needs of the individual(s) served. All volunteers will have the opportunity to evaluate the placement.

Evaluation will be completed through one or more of these methods: site visits, staff feedback, written documentation, or other evaluation processes established by each site.

Section VIII. Separation

Either the volunteer or the agency may terminate the volunteer relationship at will.

Section IX. Recognition

Recognition of volunteer time and contributions is the responsibility of everyone in DHHS but the primary responsibility lies with the Volunteer Coordinator. Recognition should be on an ongoing basis, and at a minimum, all volunteers will be recognized on an annual basis.

Section X. Liability and Risk Management

The following reflects DHHS policy and this information must be explained to the volunteer prior to placement:

- A. A volunteer, as provided in the Congressional Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, while performing within the scope of his/her responsibilities for the state, may not be liable for injuries or harm resulting from his/her conduct unless the conduct is willful, criminal, reckless or resulting from a conscious or flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of others.
- B. Transportation volunteers who have a valid driver's license are covered under the state automobile liability policy. If a volunteer is driving a personal vehicle, their owner's insurance is primary. The volunteer must provide proof of minimum automobile insurance coverage as required by the State of Nebraska.

- C. A volunteer registered with the DHHS is not covered by insurance or indemnified by the State for any legal suits against him/her as a result of damage to a person or property in the course of his/her volunteer work.
- D. A volunteer is not covered by Worker's Compensation through DHHS should s/he become injured in the course of his/her volunteer work.
- E. If the volunteer feels that intentional acts or negligence on the part of the DHHS and/or its staff was the cause for his/her personal liability or injury, s/he may file a claim seeking recovery of loss through the Office of Risk Management/State Claims Board.

Requirements for Volunteers Driving a Vehicle in the Course of Performing Volunteer Duties:

- 1. Must be 19 years of age or older.
- 2. Must have completed a defensive driving course prior to driving a State vehicle as a volunteer
- 3. Must be registered as a volunteer with NDHHS and have completed an orientation on DHHS travel policies.
- 4. Must have a valid driver's license and a good driving record. (Note: the assessment of six or more points in the preceding 24 months on a driving record is the indicator for an in-depth review of circumstances.)
- 5. If the volunteer is driving his/her own vehicle, s/he must provide proof of minimum automobile insurance coverage as required by the State of Nebraska.
- 6. Must be willing to document destination and time and travel as per general DHHS operating procedures, if required.

Safety for Residents/Clients/Members and Volunteers:

Policies related to safety for individuals we serve and volunteers, including, but not limited to, universal precautions to prevent spread of infectious disease, field trips, pet programs, one-to-one placement, confidentiality, building security, volunteer/resident relationships and authorized work must be in place for each site and shared with each volunteer before placement.

Section XI. Authorized Work

The following are limitations on work that can be assigned:

Computer Access. Volunteers/interns are authorized to work with computer systems on an inquiry-only basis and this must be stated clearly to the volunteer. An exception may be made for student interns with a formal practicum agreement from a higher education institution and adequate supervision. Decision for which job(s) a volunteer/intern can access will be at the discretion of the appropriate Administrator at that location.

Case Management Activities. Volunteers/interns may be assigned tasks to assist in supporting the day-to-day activities of program case managers, with the exception of the following tasks:

- Making final determination of eligibility for services
- Authorizing medical or other provider payments
- Participating in a child abuse/neglect investigation

Additionally, volunteers serving in an Intern capacity, with a Junior or Senior standing and under the direct professional supervision of the case manager may conduct the face-to-face interview for purposes of completing the economic assistance application or review processes.

(NOTE: All volunteers/interns assigned to assist program case managers must have close supervision for all tasks.)

Professional Services. Volunteers may perform professional services only when they are certified or licensed for the service. Each site is to develop policy applicable to specific professional services that volunteers provide as part of their duties on site including credential review and job parameters.

Section XII. Expense Reimbursement

Reimbursement may be provided for necessary expenses in extreme cases related to a volunteer's work assignment. Reimbursement is at the same rate and subject to the same limitations as that received by paid staff. All reimbursements must be approved only by the appropriate administrator for that location.

Dated this 17th day of March, 2010.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kerry T. Winterer", written in a cursive style.

Kerry T. Winterer
Chief Executive Officer
Department of Health and Human Services